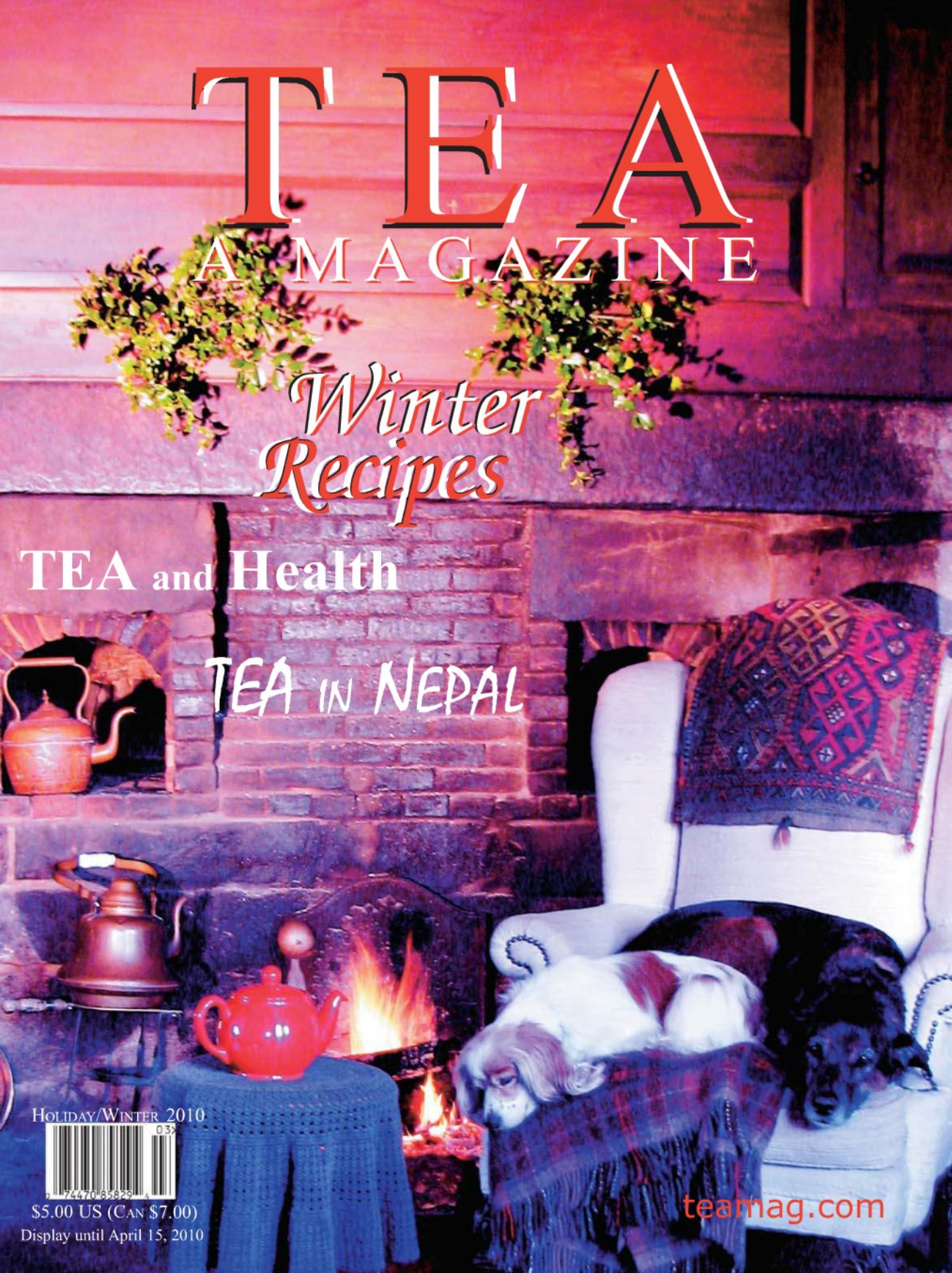
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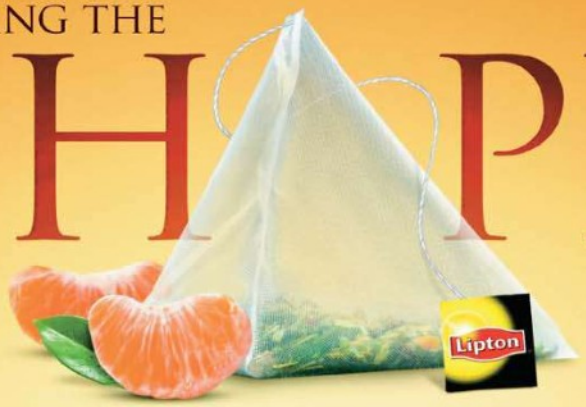

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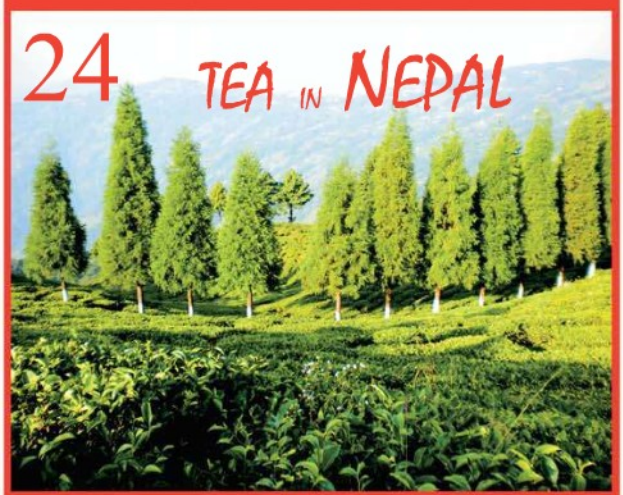

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: EDITOR'S HOME IN SCOTLAND, CONNECTICUT WITH COMPANIONS GABRIEL AND SASSY IN FRONT OF THE 18TH-CENTURY FIREPLACE.

Dedication: As Johann Sebastian Bach dedicated his music (by which I have often sipped tea), I also dedicate this work TGBTG. - Ed.

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Letter *from the Editor*

Dear Reader,

In a recent survey we asked some of our readers to let us know the topics that they would like *TEA* to cover. We begin this issue by responding to particular requests for articles on herbal infusions, tea and health, and a few more recipes. This winter season we selected some luscious deserts perfect for entertaining at home with your favorite tea. And since I will be going to South Africa in early winter we decided to include a few recipes using that country's popular indigenous plant, rooibos. The Butternut Squash-Rooibos Soup will be sure to warm one up on a cold wintry day. Certainly the Hot Rooibos Grog will do it too.

Early Americans were brewing beverages derived from other plants than the *Camellia sinensis* probably long before we threw any tea overboard in Boston. Oswego Tea, Bee Balm, Bergamot, and Yaupon are just a few that claim to refresh and stimulate as a herbal tea.

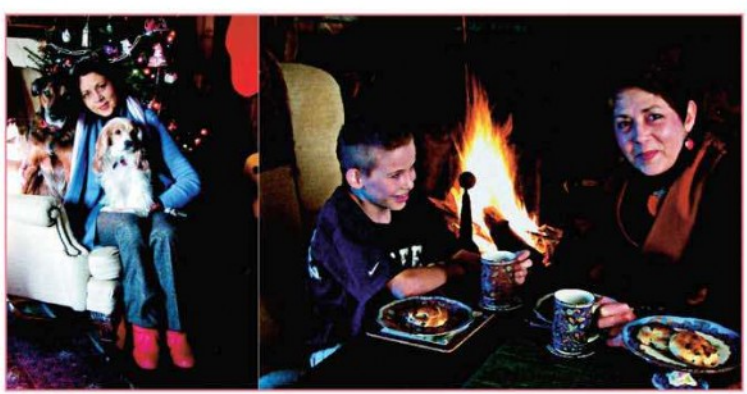
Drinking tea will keep you healthy as Jacqueline Seewald reports in her article on *Green Tea and Your Health*. Olde English Tea Company, Inc. just republished the book *serendipiTEA: a guide to the varieties, origins, and rituals of tea* in concert with my good friend Linda Villano from serendipiTEA. As she travels to the source for many of the teas that they offer, she writes about her autumn trip to Nepal. My dear colleague and friend Jane Pettigrew enlightens us with her story about her visit to China to learn about *The Teas of The Golden Bodhidharma*.

We would like to applaud all of the people in the tea business: from the growers to the large export/import companies, from the small tea rooms and cafes to the specialty purveyors of tea. They have all played a role in spreading joy with bringing a cup of cheer to billions. Those simple tea rooms have given the gift of hospitality. This year of economic change has effected many of those smaller places here in America. We are saddened some had to close their doors, but know full well that the gift of hospitality will go on as those former proprietors will still be hosting guests wherever they may be. Good news for some though! The Tea Lady in Olympia, Washington was able to expand their business and make it accessible for the disabled also.

The print industry has been effected too as newspapers and magazines go rapidly out of business. We, at *TEA*, have invested our lives in communicating the good news about tea, both as a beverage and for its cultural significance in art, music, literature, history, and society. We have modernized our approach by making our magazine available online with zinio.com, who will also be making it available via your iPhone. After 15 years we must raise our print subscription and newsstand prices. We are committed to producing interesting, quality reading for you our reader. And we thank you for your support. Please don't hesitate to contact us with your requests. It has been and will be our great pleasure to continue to serve you.

For the past twenty-five years we have shared a pot of tea with family, friends, guests, and sometimes strangers by our cozy colonial fireplace. Our cover photograph reflects some of those warm, quiet times.

Warmest regards,



Above: Pearl with her friends Sassy and Gabriel, and Christian having tea and hot chocolate by the fireplace in Scotland, Connecticut.
Photographs by: Mark J. Mumley

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Dear *TEA*,

A week or so ago I called *TEA* A MAGAZINE to bring my subscription up-to-date. I did not want to miss an issue since I have been collecting them from the srart. The lady that answered I am sure was Pearl Dexter. She was extremely kind and helpful. I noted that I had all of the issues of *TEA* except the first one. She sent me a copy! Unbelievable! I am indebted! Secondly, we had a discussion about green tea. I have tried to convert from Assam to a green tea, but nothing has satisfied me. She mentioned that she had a green tea - Glenmorgan [from Nilgiri, India]. I ordered some. I have been drinking it and it is like finding the holy grail of teas. Lastly, she inquired about the way that I prepared tea. I told her that I just put a kettle of water on and brought it to a boil. Oh my! she said that I was in the dark ages and that I should get an electric kettle. The following week, I ordered a Chef's Choice® Electric Kettle from the Tea Store and have been using it daily. She was absolutely correct. I will always remember her advice and counsel!

This note is a big Thank you!

Jim Daniels
Redding, CA

There were readers that disagreed with *TEA*'s choice of President Barack Obama's image on our winter 2008 issue. I am pleased to see that the true concept of America exists in that people extend their right to express dissent. We were NOT trying to make a political statement as to preference of party. We just felt that it was timely when someone had approached us with the idea of using the image made from herbal teas for our cover. In that issue we also included teapots that depicted and belonged to both the democrat and the republican parties. We have chosen to keep these readers names anonymous. -Ed.

Dear *TEA*,

I am debating about renewing my subscription, because I was very disappointed with the Obama cover. Not all of us tea people are happy that he is in office. If MCain won, would you have put him on the cover?

Dear *TEA*,

We were very discouraged to see Obama mania has hit even *TEA* magazine. Nowhere left that hasn't been plastered with his likeness.

We will not be renewing our subscription. I thought *TEA* magazine was suppose to be all about different teas, not a political statement. People who want politics usually buy *U. S. News* and *TIME* magazine not *TEA* magazine.

Dear *TEA*,

Since both tea and politics are essential components of life, I found the winter 2008 cover appropriate and timely. I understand not everyone appreciated the cover, how unfortunate their loss. How fortunate *TEA*'s grasp of the modern world.

Norma Hutmann
Oneonta, NY

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Green Tea and your Health

Written by JACQUELINE SEEWALD

Research presented at the American Heart Association's International Stroke Conference (ISC) is of significance to tea drinkers everywhere. According to a new UCLA study, drinking at least three cups of green or black tea a day can significantly reduce your risk of stroke. The more you drink the better your odds of preventing a stroke. The UCLA researchers found nine studies describing 4,378 strokes among nearly 195,000 individuals. According to lead author Lenore Arab, a professor of medicine in the division of general internal medicine and health services research at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, if you drink three cups of tea a day, the risk falls by 21 percent, and it therefore follows that with another three cups the risk drops another 21 percent. This effect was found in tea made from the plant Camellia Sinensis, not from herbal teas.

Although a randomized clinical trial is still needed to confirm this effect, the findings suggest that drinking three cups of green or black tea a day could help prevent an ischemic stroke which occurs when vessels become clogged, rather than a hemorrhagic stroke which is when vessels rupture and cause blood to leak into the brain. Ischemic strokes account for around 83 per cent of all stroke cases, with hemorrhagic being far less common.

The study results were published in the online edition of *Stroke: Journal of the American Heart Association* and presented Feb. 19, 2009 at the American Heart Association's annual International Stroke Conference in San Diego, California. It should be mentioned that The Unilever Lipton Institute of Tea funded this study.

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The Lipton Institute of Tea is Unilever's dedicated tea research facility, headquartered at Sharnbrook, just outside London in the UK. It is entirely Unilever funded, and works with both its own in-house experts and external tea researchers to uncover new physical and mental health properties pertaining to tea. The Lipton Institute of Tea publishes regular academic papers, aimed at uncovering and sharing the physical and mental health benefits of tea.

One warning: researchers at the University of Southern California (USC) have found that green tea interferes with a cancer drug used to treat multiple myeloma and mantle cell lymphoma, causing the drug to be completely ineffective in treating cancer. This study found that a component of green tea extract (GTE) called EGCG destroys any anti-cancer activity of the drug Velcade in tumor-bearing mice. The study was published in the journal *Blood (*February 3, 2009). According to the researchers, it was a completely unexpected finding. Velcade would be unable to cause side effects either. Patients would feel a lot better and conclude that the consumption of GTE helped cope with side effects, but in reality, Velcade simply wouldn't be active. The research findings are part of a larger project run by the team that is called "Yin-Yang Properties of Green Tea Extract in Combination Cancer Chemotherapy: From Encouragingly Beneficial to Dangerously Detrimental."

However, you should be aware that green tea is a cancer fighter under the right circumstances. A study found that green tea is high in the antioxidant EGCG (epigallocatechin-3- gallate) which helps prevent the body's cells from becoming damaged and prematurely aged. Studies have suggested that the combination of green tea and EGCG may also be beneficial in providing protection against certain types of cancers, including breast cancer. In a study conducted by researchers at the University of Mississippi, it was found that consuming EGCG significantly inhibits breast tumor growth in female mice. The details were published in an article by the American Physiological Society, April 8, 2008.

In addition, chemicals found in green tea may be able to fight off the cognitive deficits that occur with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), according to a study published in the second issue for May 2008 of the American Thoracic Society's *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*.

All in all, there are a great many benefits to drinking green tea. However, it is immensely important to keep well informed. Hopefully, the preceding information did just that.

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WINTER TEA

"In all things of *Nature* there is something of the *Marvelous.*"

Aristotle 384–322bc

The ice storm of January 2009 in Morgantown, Kentucky and its aftermath caused many people to employ various forms of survival techniques, and then take one step further to seek entertainment.

Photos by Linda J. Hawkins

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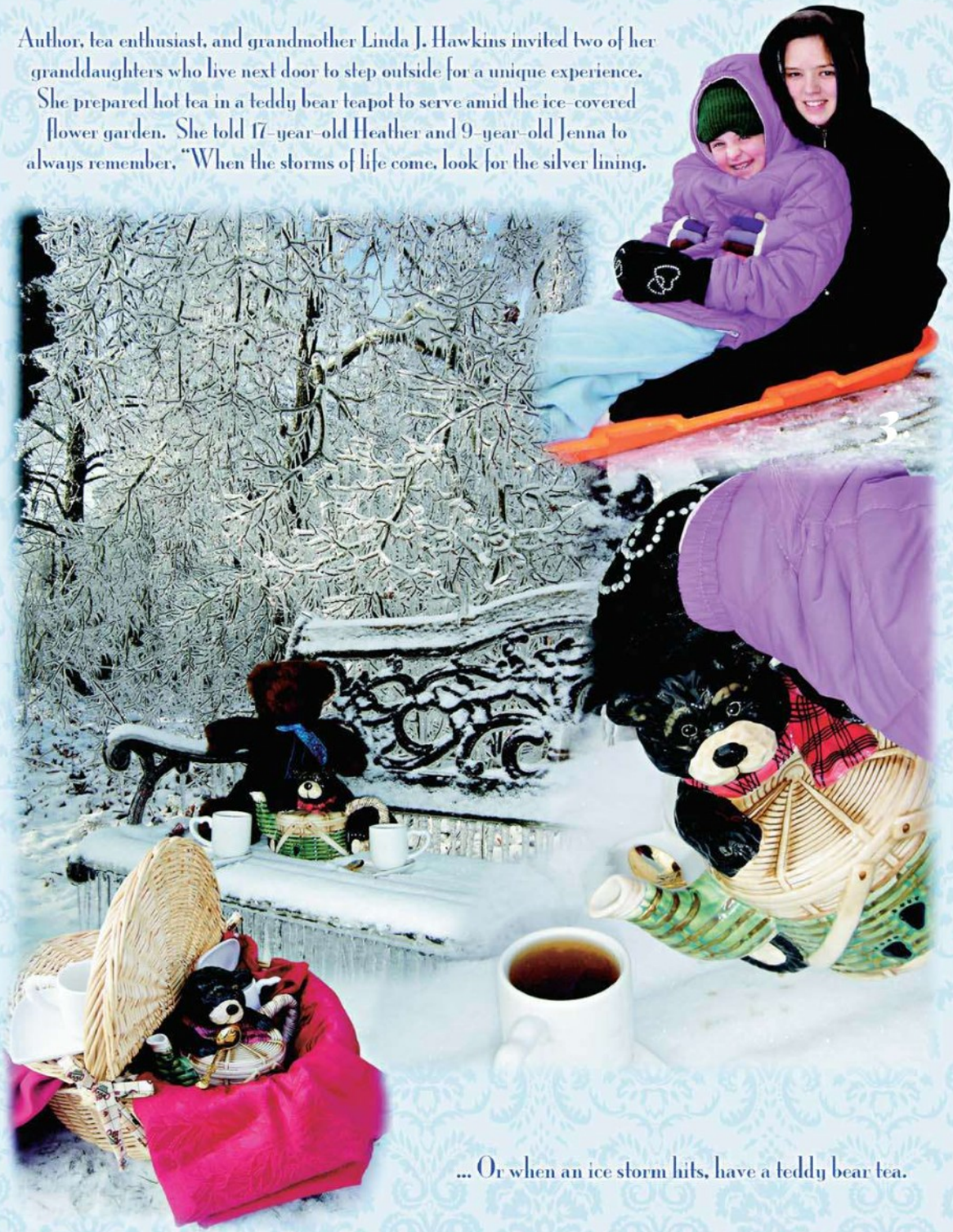
Author, tea enthusiast, and grandmother Linda J. Hawkins invited two of her granddaughters who live next door to step outside for a unique experience. She prepared hot tea in a teddy bear teapot to serve amid the ice-covered flower garden. She told 17-year-old Heather and 9-year-old Jenna to always remember, "When the storms of life come, look for the silver lining.



... Or when an ice storm hits, have a teddy bear tea.

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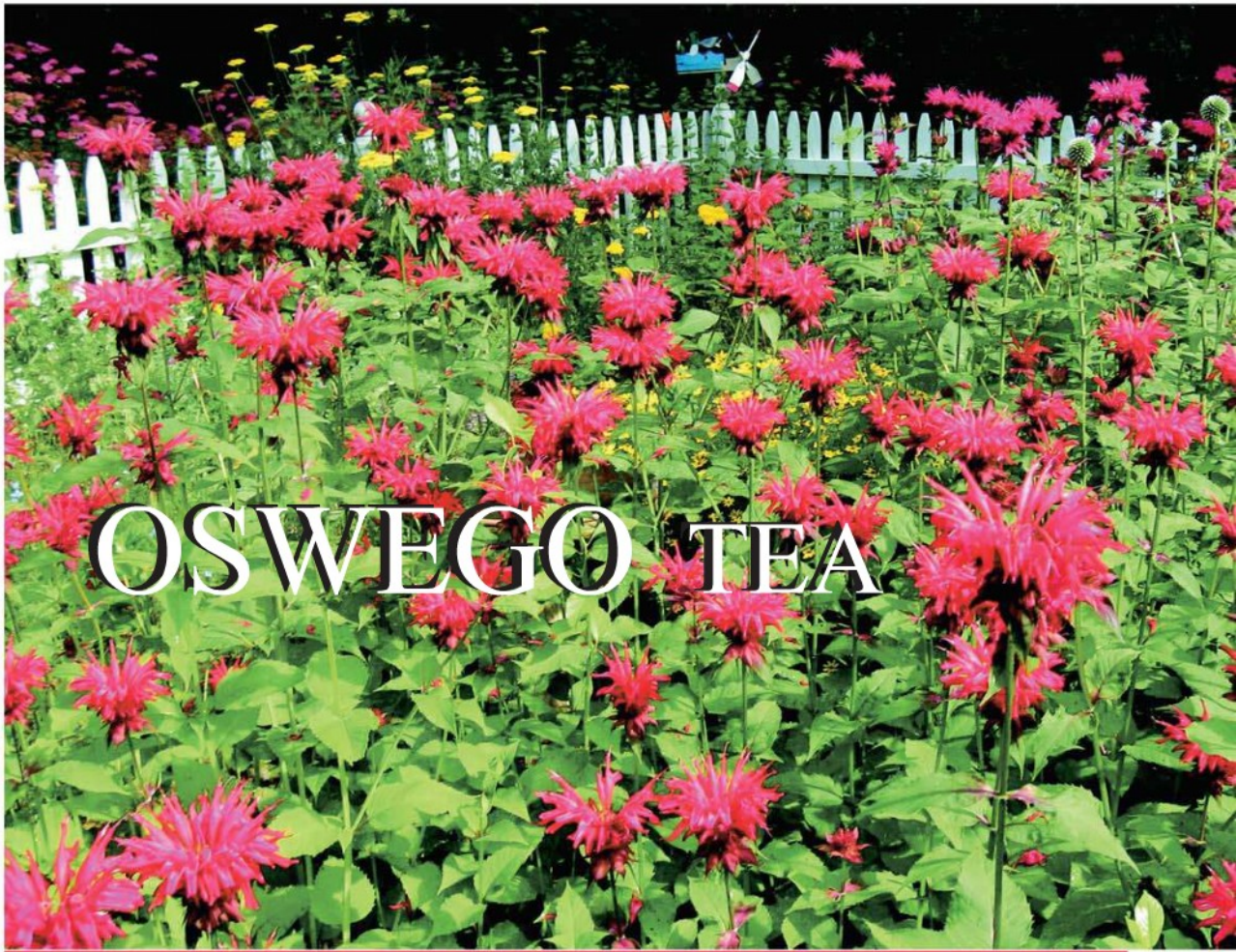

OSWEGO TEA

A TRULY AMERICAN TEA; AND MORE

Story and photographs by David McCormick.
David has been published in *Northeast Antiques, Old Farmer's Almanac,* and *America's Civil War.*

The buzzing of a bee—the gentle fluttering of a butterfly's wings—the rhythmic beat of the ruby-throated hummer fills the garden. Oswego Tea—Bee Balm—Bergamot; take your pick; they're all names for the very same plant—one that no words can paint. This perennial draws each of winged pollinators to its nectar secreted within the scarlet red tubular blossoms. Unlike many imports that were brought to America by early settlers, historically significant; bee balm, indigenous to eastern North America, was here long before the first Europeans arrived.

Several of the Indian tribes were recorded as having many uses for the bright scarlet perennial. The Native Americans relied on the wild bergamot for numerous medicinal remedies. It was purported to alleviate an array of ills: combating fever and infections, tending minor wounds and relieving digestive ailments were a few. The leaves from the herbaceous plant, once dried and brewed make for a pleasant drink, called Oswego Tea. Leaves crushed between the fingers added savory spice to venison or fowl.

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Scarlet Red Bee Balm

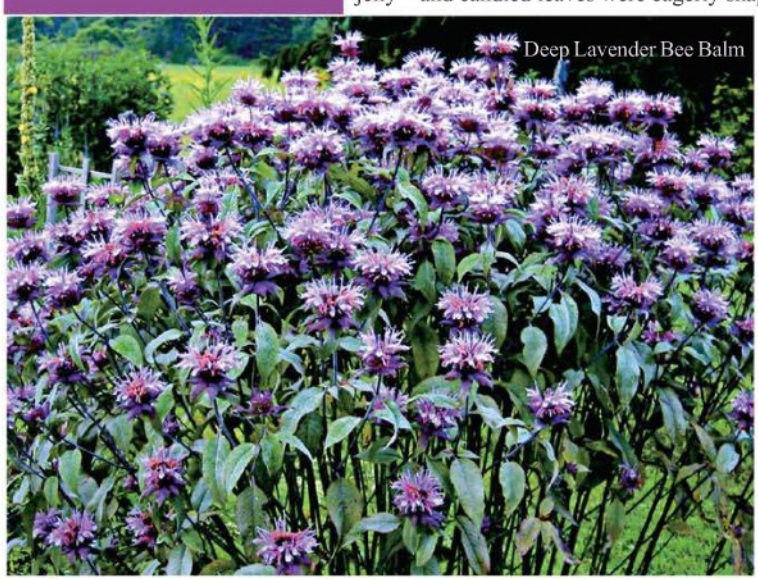
The Indians of North America shared their knowledge of the culinary and curative habits of their Oswego tea with the early English colonists; which in hindsight, they surely regretted.

English botanist John Bartram, a flora predecessor to John Muir and Johnny Appleseed, scoured the forests and meadows throughout the northeast and westward to the Ohio valley—garnering a botanic treasury, which would become America's first true botanical garden. Included in his trove were specimens of wild bergamot and scarlet bee balm. An integral part of Bartram's mission was to import plants from Europe to add to the American landscape—and to return the favor, sending plants native to North America across the sea to English compatriots. In this fashion, wild bergamot and bee balm, in the form of seeds and cuttings, were introduced to European gardens.

During the time of unrest that was taking over the colonies, bee balm was well known and often used for all its herbal and prophylactic attributes. But after the Boston Tea Party, which was the colonists' answer to the tax levied on British tea, the cultivating of bergamot greatly increased. The colonists refused to imbibe in the English tea, opting instead to drink Oswego Tea.

The Oswego tea was used throughout New England and the southern colonies. The leaves from bee balm were dried and brewed as tea by the colonists in Virginia, as the restored gardens of Williamsburg will attest. And in New York, the Shakers learning of the plants healing and culinary qualities applied the use of bergamot to their everyday lives.

The trademark, tall, square stalked upright perennials, with their scarlet red flowers, stood as sentinels in colonial herb and cottage gardens. The bergamot's leaves and flowers espoused many household uses. Aside from the Oswego tea, the plant's pulverized leaves added flavoring to soft cheeses—bergamot leaves, harvested in mid-to-late summer, combined with cooking apples and sweetened with coarse sugar, made a tantalizing jelly—and candied leaves were eagerly snapped up by little fingers.



Deep Lavender Bee Balm

The early homes, simple and grand alike, were sweetened within utilizing potpourris. Customarily created with rose petals as a base—other scented herbals and flowers, such, as a bee balm, was added to the mixture. These aromatic potpourris were in favor on both sides of the Atlantic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

During the Revolutionary War, Patriots and British soldiers alike welcomed the hot brewed bergamot tea on a cold day's march. To the rebels, the tea from colonists' gardens was offered freely—whereas the English helped themselves.

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Pink Bee Balm

Early American beekeepers may likely have located their skeps within close proximity of the Bergamot. There, in a symbiotic relationship, the honeybees could pollinate the plants and infuse the hives with honey.

The formal name for Oswego Tea, *Monarda didyma* was derived from Nicolas Monardes, for it was in his book, written in 1574, that he described the plant—"very fragrant, wide-mouthed brilliant scarlet flowers…" "A perfectly hardy perennial of easiest culture…" *M. didyma* has a close relative, *M. fistulosa*, a wild bergamot of lavender hue, which also claims the same attributes. Both excitingly fragrant, but each has its own dissimilar scent—mixtures of spicy, citrusy bouquets.

M. didyma and *M. fistuosa* are considered heirloom plants. They have been part of our lore for well over two centuries, and have continued to reproduce unmolested, through both pollination and vegetative regeneration. Today, Bee Balm revisits the same niches it filled two hundred years ago, playing an important role in several varieties of gardens. And there's something to be said about growing a plant that our ancestors cultivated since before the American Revolution—a cultivar steeped in our country's history.

Bee balm fits well in both perennial and herb gardens. Valued for its telltale scarlet red flowers that return year after year, bergamot's leaves and flowers also have a place in the household. In kitchen and backdoor gardens, its uses are limitless.

Fresh leaves can be used in cooking—the flowers may become part of a salad—or a brightly colored garnish. Cutting the stems at about twelve inches, the blossoms can be hung to dry, for future use in dried flower and herbal arrangements. In candle making, the leaves suspended in the translucent paraffin imbue a sprinkling of green to the wax as it solidifies.

Over the years perennials from the genus *Monarda* were cultivated in apothecary plots. Prized for its sedative effects, the bee balm was harvested and included with other herbs, steeped in boiling water or milk to make stress-relieving tisanes.

Varieties of bee balm or bergamot are brought to light in the many shades of color seen in gardens today. Reds of various depths are prominently displayed along with light and deep lavender varieties. White flowers and those of various pink coloration bloom through the summer months. But it is the brilliant scarlet red that really lives up to its name, invitingly drawing bees and hummingbirds in large numbers.

The many gay colors of bee balm are indicated in their descriptive names: the *Alba*, with large white flowers; *Jacob Kline*, brilliant red flowers; *Violet Queen*, lavender flowers similar to wild bergamot; and *Marshall's Delight*, a pink variety. These are just a few of a rather diverse floral mosaic.

Brilliant Magenta Bee Balm

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Editor's Collection

These are a Few of My Favorite Things...

This teapot and sugar bowl was a gift from a friend from England. It is described in Edward Bramah's book "Novelty Teapots" (page 198) as "Gypsy Caravan by Shorter & Sons of Stoke-on-Trent. 1950."

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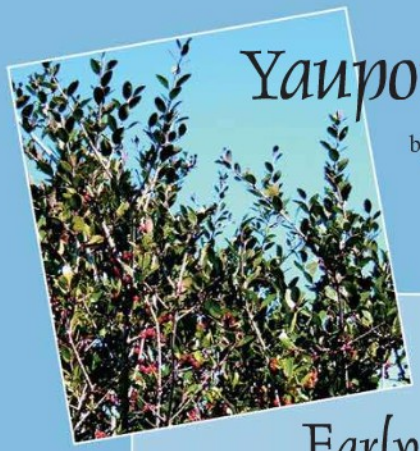

Yaupon Tea: An Early American Favorite

by Sarah Downing

Early accounts of explorers and surveyors in America tell of several Native American tribes who drank a tea made from the leaves and twigs of the yaupon for medicinal, ceremonial, and social purposes. Yaupon, a member of the holly family, grows along the coastal plain of the southeastern United States from Virginia to Florida and west to Texas, however the drink was so popular that it was traded to Native American tribes living far from the coast.

John Lawson, explorer, surveyor, and naturalist wrote in 1714, "This plant is the Indian Tea, us'd and approv'd by all the Savages on the Coast of Carolina, and from them sent to the Westward Indians and sold at a considerable price."

The first step in preparing yaupon tea, which contains caffeine, is to cure the leaves and twigs. The berries of the yaupon plant are poisonous and never ingested. Native Americans bruised the leaves and twigs using a mortal and pestle and then placed them in a clay pot over an open fire. After the contents began to smoke, it was removed from the fire and spread out on a mat and placed in the sun to dry.

Because of the availability and pleasant taste of yaupon tea it was consumed by colonial settlers and eventually became so popular it was exported to England. Coastal residents cured the leaves and twigs by chopping with a hatchet and then layering the mixture in barrels over stones that had been heated in a fire. The dried leaves were then steeped in hot water for two minutes.

While surveying the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina in 1728, William Byrd noted, "Among the shrubs we were shewed (sic) here and there [was] a bush of Carolina-tea called Japon." Byrd wrote that although it resembled English tea it varied greatly in taste and flavor.

There are varying accounts of how yaupon received its Latin name, *Ilex vomitoria*. While it is known that Native Americans used yaupon to create a purgative ceremonial beverage, the black drink, some historians attribute this quality to the tea being made extra strong. Others believe some other substance may have been added to the black drink to cause vomiting and yet some think the name refers to the poisonous nature of the berries.

While yaupon tea fell out of fashion after the Civil War, it was still imbibed in the isolated coastal areas of North Carolina into the twentieth century.

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Is This Trinket Necessary

Written and photographed by Eve Hill

With all the holidays that come in the winter season, there are many occasions for parties, especially tea parties. Sometimes a small gift or favor enhances the get-together and if it is a tea party it can be a tea trinket marking Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year, Valentines Day, or just friendship. Hosts, hostesses, friends and sometimes just acquaintances often become either the giver or recipient of some of those small remembrances that may wind up in a drawer or collecting dust somewhere.

Tea-themed Christmas ornaments from Eve Hill's collection.

Any of us who are known tea fanciers will get gifts celebrating tea. Somehow, though, getting little teacups or tiny china teapots can soon accumulate. The first few are charming, but some may be a bit tacky, even if given in a spirit of generosity and friendship. What to do with these? Should they be displayed? How and where? If the giver is a regular visitor, will they be annoyed or upset that their gift is not around to be admired by all? We'll try to sort this out, but the reader will please use his or her own judgment and ingenuity about the whole subject.

First, you may want to wish to consider value. Was this a gift from your dear grandmother or your best friend in the world? This is the most important value of all, the connection with the donor. Then, is this a lovely miniature teapot or teacup of fine porcelain, perhaps made by an important English china manufacturer or something of similar worth? Value as well as beauty, we all know, are in the eye of the beholder. A flimsy little tea charm from a dollar store given by your grandmother or beloved aunt is worth more than any fine *objet d'art* from an impersonal source. Does the material lend itself to easy display? Very fragile items may best be kept in a safe place if they are valued. Some of those delicate glass objects may perhaps displayed in a sealed shadow box safely hung on a wall but never in a place where they will be handled or need to be dusted.

Shadow boxes come in a wide range of sizes and depths and can be custom made, so these are a good choice for displaying bits and pieces of ephemera or memories. A good frame shop can help with this if you are not sure what to include or where to begin. This is the place to include those tiny things that might not be noticed otherwise.

One of the newer tea trinkets is the tea charm, usually given as a guest favor and fastened to the handle of a guest's teacup by a small attractive ribbon. Inexpensive versions are sometimes sold in sets of assorted shapes symbolizing tea time but there are many gold, silver, crystal and other nicer ones marketed. Display the better ones on a bracelet or necklace and get creative for the rest.

Miniature teapots and teacups can be set along a small shelf or suspended from one of those wood based ornament hangers. Your tiny teapots may be the kind that only come out once a year and are hung on your holiday tree, as some delicate glass ones in my own collection are. These are special for the memories they bring and the oldest ones are sometimes too fragile for year-round display. If you are the lucky possessor of some of those porcelain ones or similar miniatures, you may want to consider just putting them on a faux evergreen tree and leaving them out for admiring glances and closer looks. Even if you don't leave the tree out all year long it is a happy way to celebrate tea and the friends who gave you the little mementos and ornaments you put on it. If you do keep the tree done up and on display after the holiday season, placing it in a little spot that quietly says "Tea" instead of screaming "This was not put away and here it is." Small red ribbons and hearts added for February, green decoration among the miniature teapots for March, and so on through the year would keep your tree display looking updated and fun. Many tea lovers who have accidental collections of these little items are doing this.

Whatever you choose to do, don't just drop them in a drawer or push them to the back of a closet. Either display them or give away the ones you don't want to keep.

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The TEA LADY in Oregon relocates!

"The longtime downtown Olympia business Tea Lady has moved to a new location, a decision largely spurred by the need for more room" the headline in The Olympian newspaper read on August 14, 2009. "This month Tea Lady moved into 3,133 square feet in the Wildwood Building at 2828 Capitol Boulevard S.E., up from about 2,100 square feet at the old location in downtown's Capitol Theater building," the article continued.

Carol Welch (owner) decided to move the business when a larger location with ample parking became available just as Carol and her husband, Felix D'Allesandro, were planning to renovate their existing space. "I would move our shop there in a heartbeat if it ever opens up. It is larger, has great parking and is on a busy main street," Welch often mentioned to her husband. A friend told her a state agency would be moving out of the space July 31, 2009. Welch sent a letter to the building owner the next day. Three weeks went by without hearing anything despite a second letter, e-mails, and voice messages. Welch and D'Allesandro pondered whether to go ahead with the remodel. They had misgivings because they had just learned their building had been listed for sale. Finally, however, the owner of the new building left a voice mail to set up a meeting. Things moved quickly after that.

It was now mid-June. "We worked with our long time shop manager, Cari McCarty, to set out an ambitious schedule to demolish the many office walls in the new space and remodel it. We said we would do all of this in one month, opening August 1st. We did it on schedule and a few dollars under budget." Welch said.

Tea Lady, which sells more than 700 kinds of teas and accessories and features a tea bar, was downtown for 14 years, nine of which were in the Capitol Theater building.

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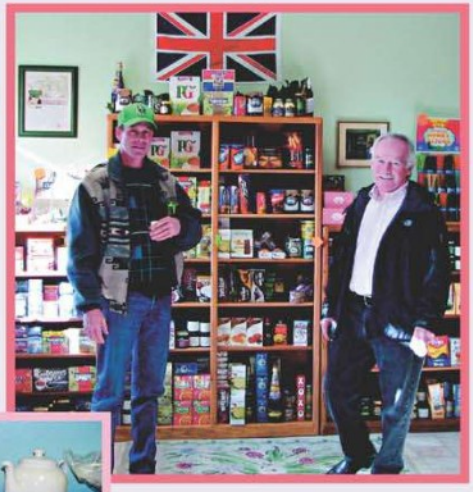
Left: Carol Welch serving customer Robin Gunn on opening day.
Left center: Cari McCarty, manager with longtime customers.
Right top: Tully Swanberg and wife.
Right bottom: Felix D'Allesandro and Kurt.

Welch said she loves downtown Olympia, but acknowledged that some of her customers with mobility issues had difficulty accessing the old store. There is very little parking downtown. Our new location has 28 parking spaces.

Fourteen years ago, Tea Lady started with no employees in an antique mall but today has grown to a staff of eight and continues to grow even in this slower economy. She attributes that steady growth to more people spending time at home and drinking a healthy product that helps them feel comfortable and reduces stress.

Tea Lady sells all kinds of tea—green, black, white, oolong, herbal tisanes, and a selection of British foods and snacks. Green tea is one of the store's most popular teas. A newsletter regularly updates customers on top-selling teas and special events. Customers like the concept of a store that caters strictly to tea. The new store also feels much more open, and the tea bar is a frequent meeting place and is often booked for tea parties.



TEA LADY is open seven days a week,
Sundays 12-5 and Mondays-Saturdays 10-6.
2828 Capitol Blvd. SE, Olympia, WA 98501
Telephone: 360-786-0350
www.tea-lady.com

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Winter Recipes

Dolly's Carrot Cake

2 cups flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1-1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon
2 cups sugar
1-1/4 cups oil
4 eggs
2 cups carrots, grated and lightly packed
1 (8-1/4-ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained (reserve drained liquid)
1/2 cup nuts, chopped
1/2 cup raisins (optional)

Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon together into a large bowl. Add sugar, oil, and eggs; mix well. Stir in carrots, drained pineapple, and nuts. Turn into a well-greased 10-inch tube pan, bundt pan, or whatever shaped pan you like. Preheat oven to 350° F and baked for 50 to 60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in pan, then turn onto rack to cool completely. Frost with frosting of your choice—cream cheese frosting is perfect! Or served it plain or with a dusting of powdered sugar.

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We at *TEA* selected these easy to make recipes from Susan Rios' latest book, *Mini Teatimes*. The carrot cake was so moist and delicious. I ground up our fresh cinnamon sticks from Sri Lanka for the recipe and sprinkled more cinnamon on the frosted cupcakes.-Ed.

Cream Cheese FROSTING

Combine reserved liquid from canned crushed pineapple with 8 ounces softened cream cheese, 2-1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar, and 1 teaspoon real vanilla. Beat until very smooth and glossy. This will be more like a thick glaze than a traditional frosting. Pour over the cooled cake and let it drip down the sides.

Taken from: *Mini Teatimes*. Copyright © 2010 by Susan Rios. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. Used by permission.

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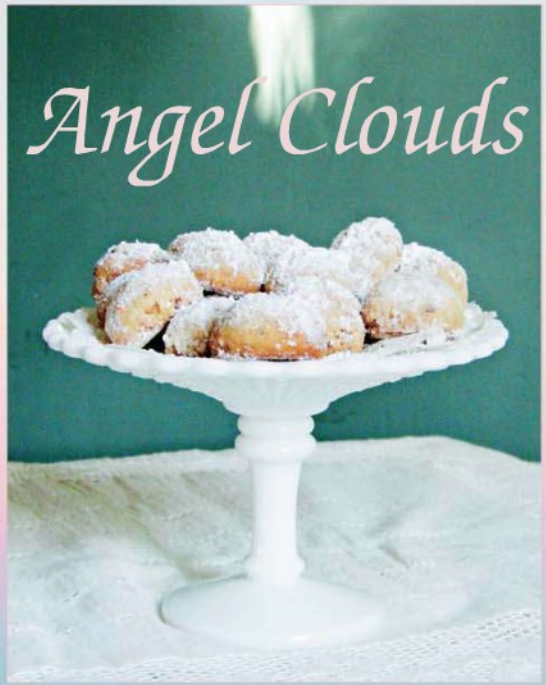
Angel Clouds



These melt-in-your-mouth cookies have many other names, such as Russian Tea Cakes or Snowballs, but we always call them Angel Clouds because they are a light as a cloud and as delicately sweet as an angel's kiss.
-Susan Rios

1 cup butter, softened
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup powdered sugar
2-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup pecans, finely chopped
2 cups powdered sugar

Cream butter, vanilla, and 1/2 cup powdered sugar until light and creamy. Sift together flour and salt and stir in pecans. Gently mix with butter mixture until just combined—do not over-mix. Roll into 1-inch balls and place on greased baking sheet about 1 inch apart. Bake at 350° F for 12 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned. As soon as you can handle the hot cookies, roll them in the 2 cups of powdered sugar. Immediately reroll them a second time and then let the cool completely. They will taste better the next day, but they rarely last that long!

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Sissy's Lemon Bars

Crust

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1 cup butter

Sift flour and powdered sugar. cut in butter until mixture clings together (you can use a food processor). Press this mixture into a greased 13 x 9-inch glass baking dish. Bake at 350° F for 25 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges. Let cool while making the filling.

Filling

5 eggs
2 cups granulated sugar
3/4 cup lemon juice
2 teaspoons freshly grated lemon peel
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Beat eggs, granulated sugar, lemon juice, and peel until thick and lemon-colored. Sift flour and baking powder together and fold gently into egg mixture. Pour over baked crust. Bake at 350° F for 25 minutes or until the filling is set and forms a thin sugar crust with lightly browned edges. When cool, sprinkle with sifted powdered sugar and cut into small squares.

My friend Sissy worked as a caterer and perfected this yummy lemon bar. If there are any leftovers (doubtful) store in the refrigerator.
-Susan Rios

Recipes on pages 18-19 taken from: *Mini Teatimes*. Copyright © 2010 by Susan Rios. Published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. Used by permission.

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Chocolate Cherub Cake

A delightful creation for angel food cake lovers! Very little fat, yet tastes sinful!

Cake:
1-1/2 cups egg whites
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
2 cups sugar
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup cocoa powder
Cooking spray

Icing:
1 cup sifted powdered sugar
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
1-1/2 tablespoons skim milk
1 teaspoon cocoa powder

Filling:
1-1/2 cup instant vanilla pudding (made with skim milk)
1/2 cup mini milk chocolate chips

Beat the egg whites and salt until creamy. Add cream of tartar and beat until stiff peaks form. Fold in sugar, lemon juice, and vanilla. In a separate bowl, sift flour, baking powder, and cocoa two times, then fold into egg white mixture. Pour into tube pan lightly sprayed with cooking spray. Bake at 350° F for 55-60 minutes. Remove from oven and turn out of pan immediately. Allow cake to cool at least 45 minutes before icing. In a mixing bowl stir together icing ingredients and drizzle over cooled cake.

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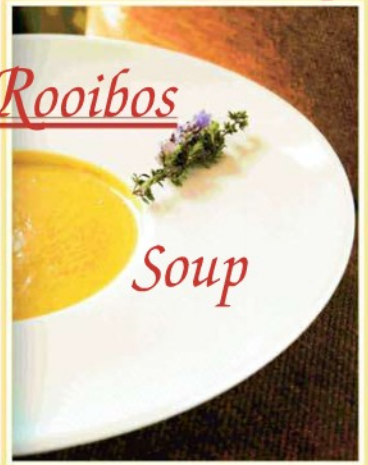
Butternut Squash-Rooibos Soup



1 litre (33.8 oz.)water
3 Rooibos tea bags
1 kg (2.2 lbs.) butternut squash, halved & remove seeds
1 clove garlic, sliced
olive oil
1 medium onion, finely sliced (100g-.22lbs.)
500 ml (16.9 oz.) cream
salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Pour the water into a medium-sized saucepan, add the Rooibos tea bags and bring to the boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, then remove from the heat and leave the Rooibos to infuse for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bags.
2. Preheat the oven to 180° C (356°F).
3. Place the halved butternut squash on a roasting pan, sprinkle with the garlic and a drizzle of olive oil, and roast until soft.
4. Heat a little olive oil in a large saucepan and sauté the onion until soft and translucent.
5. Add the roasted butternut squash flesh to the onion, and cook for approximately 5 minutes.
6. Add the Rooibos stock and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
7. Add the cream and simmer for 10 minutes (do not allow to boil).
8. Season to taste and mix well.

SERVES 4

Recipe by Edgar Osojnik from the book, *A touch of Rooibos*.

Hot Rooibos Grog

25 ml (0.845 oz.) cognac or brandy
25 ml (0.845 oz.) dark rum
250 ml (8.45 oz.) hot, strong Rooibos
3 whole cloves
3 ml (0.101 oz.) honey
pinch nutmeg
cinnamon stick to serve

1. Heat all the ingredients, apart from the cinnamon stick, in a small saucepan.
2. Serve hot with the cinnamon stick.

Recipe by Liquid Chefs for Rooibos Limited from the book, *A touch of Rooibos*.

SERVES 1

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Tea in the Blogosphere

The New Tea Frontier

written by Katrina Ávila Munichiello

Aspiring food writers. Cafe owners. Teapot collectors. Those who sup in white gloves and elegant hats. Blog writers come from all walks of life and they are helping to spread their love of tea in a brand new way.

Tea enthusiasts from around the globe have been committing their passions to the page in the form of blogs. In-depth reviews of new tea blends, analyses of caffeine extraction rate research, etiquette tips for hosting tea parties, and travel journals from tea estate visits are just some of the topics covered in these online publications.

I have identified more than 225 blogs currently being published in English, and I am certain that there are far more I have not yet discovered. Some of the blogs are published by vendors, promoting their current products and services. However, it seems that more of the blogs are written by enthusiasts who do not benefit financially from their work (other than the occasional advertising or affiliate arrangement.) The authors write to share information, document their experiences, and connect with other tea lovers.

No single blog will appeal to all. Sites like Adagio Tea's Tea Critic (www.teacritic.com) and Dragonwater Tea Company's Tea Talk (http://www.teatalk.org/en/) offer the benefit of aggregating a selection of blogs in one location. TeaCritic, Tea Talk, and similar sites can provide readers with a brief introduction to some of the blog styles and topics available.

These are just a few of the tea blogs that I have taken note of lately as particularly well-written, informative, and entertaining.

GENERAL INTEREST TEA BLOGS

A Felicific Life - afelicificlife.blogspot.com - This blog from the UK doesn't publish very often, but it utilizes spectacular photographs to document the author's extensive tea travels.

Bon Teavant - blog.waytotea.com - Author of *The Way to Tea: Your Adventure Guide to San Francisco Tea Culture*, Jennifer Leigh Sauer, uses her extensive connections to provide in depth interviews, reports, and analysis of the "New American Tea Culture."

Cha Dao - chadao.blogspot.com - Cha Dao publishes in depth, extensively researched essays, and has a particular focus on teas from Pacific Asia.

Friendship Tea - friendshiptea.blogspot.com - Linda J. from Kentucky talks about her teaware, afternoon teas, and her family.

Gongfu Girl - www.gongfugirl.com - An extremely well-written blog composed by a team of writers that focuses heavily on Asian-style tea and tea practice.

Mattcha's Blog - mattchasblog.blogspot.com - With spectacular photos, Matt adds detailed journals of tea travel experiences amongst his tea reviews.

Tea Finely Brewed - teafinelybrewed.com - In his visually appealing blog, Eric explores many topics in short entries with excellent photos.

TeapotsTeapotsTeapots- teapotsteapotsteapots.blogspot.com - Andy, a craftsman in his own right, provides an eclectic collection of teapot photos and entries for you to enjoy.

World Tea News blogs - http://www.worldteanews.com/index.php/WTN-Blogs.html - World Tea News publishes five blogs: Babette Donaldson's "The Art and Spirit of Tea" connects fine tea and fine arts, Bryan Stafford's "Tea and Marketing" provides tips on starting a tea business, George and Kim Jage's "Market Movers" tracks industry trends, Jane Pettigrew's "Passport to Tea" discusses world tea travels, and Richard Guzauskas's "About Tea" helps you find and steep the best tea.

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TEA TYPE SPECIFIC BLOGS

Ancient Tea Horse Road - ancientteahorseroad.blogspot.com - This blog, written by Bill in Minnesota, is devoted to the author's love of pu-erh.

BearsBlog - puerh.blogspot.com - Jason from BearsBlog documents his love of pu-erh and the beautiful pottery he finds and creates.

The Green Tea Review - thegreenteareview.blogspot.com - Wesley's blog, launched in August of 2007, explores green tea of all kinds.

TEA REVIEWS

Authoritea - authoritea.blogspot.com - Jessica, a tea enthusiast from New York, is a prolific writer, with nearly 600 reviews since her blog's launch in 2007.

Me and my Tea - meandmytea.blogspot.com - California resident, Eric, has published more than 300 tea reviews over the past 2 years. The entries are well presented, interesting to read, and utilize a simple rating system.

Multiple Infusions - www.multipleinfusions.com - With its gorgeous photo calendar home page, this tea review blog is absolutely one of the most attractive reads.

My Steeped IdentiTEA - mysteepedidentitea.blogspot.com - This blog, written by 23-year-old Brittiny, offers candid reviews and a clean layout.

Teaviews.com - www.teaviews.com - Boasting nearly 1,500 reviews, Teaviews.com is one of the most comprehensive sites available. With a team of more than 40 reviewers, Teaviews.com reviews more teas than anyone.

Walker Tea Review - walkerteareview.com - Jason Walker offers video reviews of teas interspersed with links to reviews on other sites.

VENDOR BLOGS

Imperial Tea Court - camelliasinensisblog.blogspot.com - The Imperial Tea Court blog features shop announcements, posts from owner Roy Fong, and links to other news of interest.

Samovar Tea - samovarlife.com/tea-blog - Samovar's blog introduces you to their company, but also provides some excellent informational pieces that will teach you more about getting the most from your leaf. Blog authors include owner Jesse Jacobs and author Jennifer Leigh Sauer (of the previously mentioned *Bon Teavant* blog.)

T Ching - www.tching.com - With guest writers including James Norwood Pratt, Elizabeth Knight, Chris Cason, and *TEA A MAGAZINE's* own Pearl Dexter, T Ching is certain to appeal to a wide range of tea lovers.

Tavalon - www.tavalon.com/blog - Tavalon's blog, The Voice of Tea, is written by Tea Sommelier, Chris Cason, and covers an eclectic mix of tea history, news, health stories, and even informational videos called TeaTube.

Tea Trekker's Blog - teatrekker.wordpress.com - Almost in a class by itself, this blog by Mary Lou Heiss and Robert Heiss (authors of *The Story of Tea*), is a fascinating tour through various teas and related topics. The Heisses also write *An Educated Palate* (aneducatedpalate.wordpress.com), which explores additional food topics. These blogs are connected with their Northampton, Massachusetts shop, Cooks Shop Here.

TeaCast Radio - www.blogtalkradio.com/teacast - Created by Ronald Eng, founder of Infusions of Tea and Kopius Tea, TeaCast Radio is an interactive radio show. Focused on the business of tea, these sixty minute shows air weekly and will educate and entertain.

Teance Teas - teapersonality.blogspot.com - Written by Teance owner, Winnie Yu, this blog contains stunning travel photos and reports.

Wife of a Tea Drinker - wifeofateadrinker.blogspot.com - Drink the Leaf owner Dan Ritzenthaler and his wife Tree, offer a blog that is both conversational and engaging.

You may find a directory of more than 225 tea blogs on Katrina Ávila Munichiello's site, Tea Pages (teapages.blogspot.com). Katrina Ávila Munichiello is the Creator/Editor of Tea Pages blog (teapages.blogspot.com.) She is also a stay-at-home mom, a freelance writer, and an avid knitter. Katrina is currently working on an anthology of tea-themed essays.

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Written by LINDA VILLANO

Photographs courtesy of LINDA VILLANO

TEA IN

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NEPAL

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The Himalayas have been the backdrop as well as the featured character in countless legends throughout time. The challenge of scaling any number of the majestic Himalayan peaks is the stuff of dreams—only a relative handful have made it to the summits but countless individuals gaze, mesmerized by its grandeur, from afar. One place with premium views is Nepal, home of Mount Everest, the highest of the Himalayan Mountains and the highest peak in the world rising to 8848 meters (29,028 feet) above sea level.

Numerous tea gardens rest in the lap of this Natural Wonder in areas known as the Plains and the Hills. The Himalaya Mountains make up the third distinct region of Nepal. Tea was introduced there in the mid-1800's, it is said, by Nepalese Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana who returned from a trip to China with tea seeds that were a gift from the Chinese Emperor. This Prime Minister instructed a Colonel named Thapa, who governed the Eastern Region of Nepal, to plant the seeds. From this initial planting two gardens were established in Ilam, and over time more followed.

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Above: Linda planting tea at Guranse Tea Estate.
Right: Sonam planting tea at Guranse Tea Estate.

There are now five tea growing regions in Nepal all located in this same Eastern region; Jhapa, Therathum, Panchthar, Ilam, and Dhankhuta with altitudes ranging from 3,000 to just over 7,000 feet. The first three areas are in the Plains or Terai where they produce low-grown tea used mainly in tea bags or for generic tea brands. Ilam and Dhankuta are in the Hills and produce high grown orthodox tea of finer quality.

Tea gardens were government run and operated until about 20 years ago when policy changes were made which permitted privatization. Since then tea in Nepal has been experiencing an increase in production and in quality as well as in domestic and overseas sales. There is now great opportunity in the Nepalese world of tea due to a growing number of newly established gardens with young plants and newly constructed factories. There is also much room for expansion beyond the Hills into other regions. Presently, a great deal of Nepalese tea is grown by small landholders and farmers who harvest their leaves and then have them processed by factories on larger gardens or at freestanding factories which do not own gardens at all.

One would be remiss in discussing Nepalese Tea without mentioning Darjeeling, the region in India, which lies in the foothills of Kanchanchunga, the third highest peak in the world, also in the Himalayan range. Nepalese gardens produce tea with flavor profiles similar to those of Darjeeling teas. Considering the close proximity of Eastern Nepal and Darjeeling, the shared growing conditions which include soil content, altitude, seasons, and climate such as warm days, cool nights and plenty of rainfall, it is not surprising to learn that Nepalese tea is often sold as Darjeeling. With this in mind, it's important to be aware of your source/supplier and to look for single estates and the Darjeeling Logo so as to be assured of origin.

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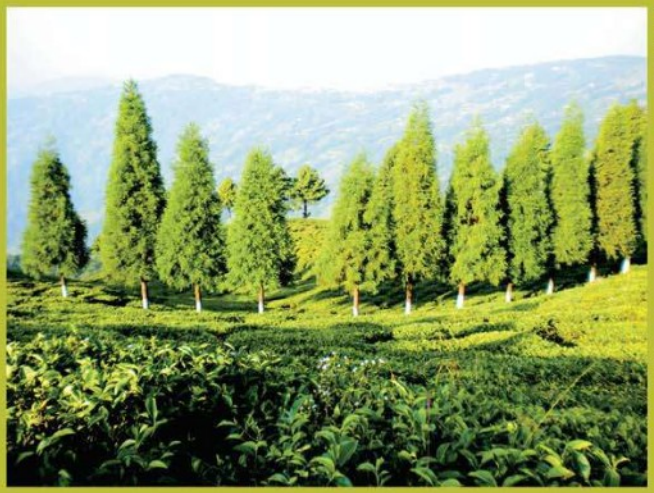

After visiting Darjeeling, where the road conditions are notoriously poor, my colleague and I crossed the India-Nepal border at Karkabitta. There we drove onto smooth tarmac that we enjoyed all the way through the lovely town of Dharan on up through the mountain passage leading to Hile and ultimately to Guranse Tea Garden. While there it rained more often than usual for early October, the beginning of the Autumnal Season. Monsoon Season seemed to be lingering and there was much talk of global warming, climate irregularities and weather pattern disruptions that have been occurring over the past few years. The garden managers and workers expressed clear concern. Several times through the evenings there were blackouts due to the weather. As if on cue, solar powered "candles" appeared that provided enough glow to keep all comfortable. The gardens in the Hills are equipped with generators as this is a common occurrence and could disrupt factory production that takes place around the clock during the heights of each season.

Guranse, rising to just over 7,000 feet at its highest point is arguably the highest tea garden in the world. Walking there is like strolling through the clouds. Guranse (which means Rhododendron and is the national flower of Nepal) was the first certified organic garden in the country. A leader in innovative farming methods, Guranse, under the close supervision and leadership of Andrew Gardner, promises to challenge all convention. With years of experience under his belt and great vision, Gardner is elevating Guranse to a height of quality equal to that of its physical standing.

The fertilizers are all-natural concoctions made from animal and plant waste (compost) and no chemical pesticides are used. Instead, Gardner creates vats of fermented cocktails, which include a myriad of herbs and plants all grown on the garden for specific purposes.

Mostly women do both manual labor and operate all the machines that run the factory. Hand manufactured tea is prevalent at this unique estate. A very fine orthodox black tea constitutes the bulk of production, followed by orthodox green tea, and a few special varieties. Interestingly, an oolong-style tea is being made incorporating a traditional method of bamboo bruising and hand-rolling. We had the pleasure of witnessing numerous tea styles being manufactured with great care and attention; the women workers sit patiently hand-sorting and hand-rolling leaves for several specialized varieties, all with stunning results.

Being so close to Northern. India, it is not surprising that Masala Chai is fairly standard in Nepal. Yet, there is a difference in preparation. In Nepal strong black tea is steeped in milk then ground spices (usually ground cinnamon, cardamom, clove, and ginger) are sprinkled on top when served. Unlike Indian Masala Chai where mixed spices are steeped with black tea then combined with steamed milk or where black tea leaves and mixed spices are simmered directly in honey-sweetened milk.

Similarities and differences aside, Nepalese tea is certain to soon emerge completely from the shadow of its world-famous neighbor, Darjeeling. And Nepalese tea is certain to become a sought after leaf in its own right, for its own merits. How fortunate we are to be witnessing and experiencing this bit of tea history in our own cups!

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Above: Tea pickers at the end of the day at Guranse Tea Estate.
Right: Andrew Gardner in the Guranse tea tasting room.
Below: Hand sorting tea and preparing tea for packing.

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-Marc Elilhu Hofstadter

CUP OF TEA

Thick buff porcelain
with curved handle
and three horizontal green stripes
Crimson nectar:
apples and cinnamon.
My body thanks me
for our good fortune.
The liquid shimmers.
The cup shines.
I drink in gulps.

TEA-SOUSED

Like Li Po I spend my time getting drunk
but on tea, not wine.
Instead of watching the moon swim
in the Yellow River,
I dawdle in my tea bar,
sailing down the broad afternoon
on a bark of Golden Pu-Erh.

VISITING THE OLD TEA BAR

Grassy Darjeeling, dusty Pu-Ehr,
perfumed Earl Grey: teas I've drunk
from ceramic, glass and iron pots,
their steam condensing into lines
of verse much as doves appear
at a magician's command,
then rising to the ceiling where they
flap their wings hoping to fly free.

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SIKKIM

Some men, perched in zendos, watch images slowly cross the stage of their minds. I lounge in a tea bar, regarding Buick fenders glint like lightning, black asphalt billow like a sea, my amber Sikkim slosh gently back and forth in its white porcelain cup, as though *it* were an ocean, and I a tiny traveler buoyed by its endless ebb and flow.

WHITE PEONY

tastes like swirling clouds lit by a gentle sun. The afternoon slows, each voice in the tea bar a flute or oboe in a languid chorus. Nothing seems to move but the leaves in the yellow pot, which shift slowly, like seaweed. As I sip the yellowish-white liquor, the room reflects its glow. People peer in the plate glass window, but they're not in my world. I linger till dusk, barely aware of a clock or an idea.

Marc Elihu Hofstadter has a Ph.D. in Literature from U.C. Santa Cruz and has taught American literatue there, at the Université d'Orléans, and at Tel Aviv University. He has publilshed four books of poetry, *House of Peace*, *Visions*, *Shark's Tooth*, and *Luck*. His newest book, *Rising at 5:00 A.M.* will be out in January 2010. His poetry was also included in *Steeped In the World of Tea* and in the spring 2005 (issue 42) of *TEA*.

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BOOK REVIEWS

An Invitation to Tea

byEmilie Barnes
Paintings by Sandy Lynam Clough
Harvest House Publishers, 2009
ISBN: 978-0-7369-2237-1
Hard cover $12.99

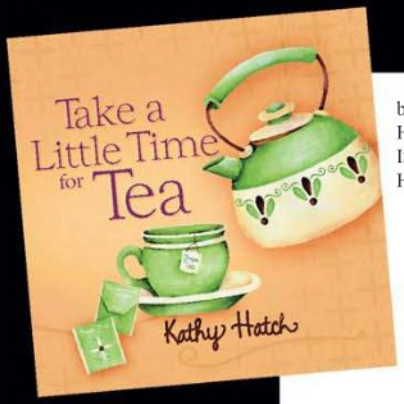
Great advice from Gail Greco, "Somehow, taking tea together encourages an atmosphere of intimacy when you slip off the timepiece in your mind and cast your fate to a delight of tasty tea, tiny foods, and thoughtful conversation." A fresh look of the bestselling book by Emilies Barnes and Sandy Clough depict six ways to put on a tea party. Alongside Sandy's paintings are recipes, inspirational quotes, and hospitality ideas for special holidays or simple get-togethers. This is a classic gift for anyone interested in tea and entertaining.

Mini Teatimes

by Susan Rios
Harvest House Publishers, 2010
ISBN: 978-0-7369-2667-6
Hard cover $9.99

This book was sized and designed with gift-giving in mind. It has 16 recipes and countless words of encouragement. Susan's paintings of a few of her favorite tea rooms in California accompany some of their recipes. We liked Susan's recipes so much that we featured three of them in this issue of *TEA*. Dolly's Carrot Cake is the most moist carrot cake I have ever tasted. The Angel Clouds (aka Russian Tea Cakes) were a perfect complement to a steaming cup of tea.

Take a Little Time for Tea



by Kathy Hatch
Harvest House Publishers, 2009
ISBN: 978-0-7369-2372-9
Hard cover $13.99

Kathy Hatch's artwork illustrates her love of tea. This gift book has seventeen easy-to-make recipes for teatime or anytime. Simple homemade jams, along with directions to make some herbal infusions are paired well with the cake recipes. A perfect recipe for Crystallized Candied Pansies will dress up any tea table. *Taking a Little Time for Tea* will warm the heart and soul in every tea drinker. It is filled with quotes from writers over the centuries. Catherine Douzel wrote, "Each cup of tea represents an imaginary voyage."

BOOK REVIEWS

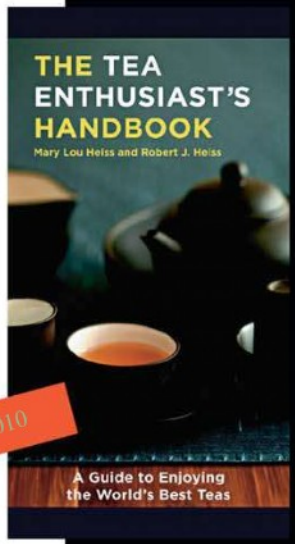
SERENDIPITEA
a guide to the varieties, origins, and rituals of tea

by Tomislav Podreka
Revised Edition published by
Olde English Tea Company, Inc., 2009
ISBN: 0-9-676682-9-8
Hard cover $16.00

THIS LITTLE VOLUME OF TEA WISDOM will put one on the right road to becoming a tea scholar. Podreka's introduction is clear as he begins, "No beverage has influenced the course of the world as much as tea…. …Today, if the world's billions of tea drinkers were to find themselves without it, they would be lost." Tomislav Podreka's insight to all that is tea is serious and educational. He begins with the history of tea then takes the reader on a journey through many tea gardens around the world. His sensitive approach to including the customs of the many lands that tea is drunk and grown enriches us all. The selection of recipes encompass Western, Middle Eastern, and Eastern cultures. The chapter on The Health Benefits of Tea is succinct and informative, ending with a glossary of tea terms and suggested readings. This is a must have book for any serious tea lover.

THE TEA ENTHUSIAST'S HANDBOOK
A Guide to Enjoying the World's Best Teas

Mary Lou Heiss and Robert J. Heiss
Ten Speed Press, 2010
ISBN: 978-1-58008-804-6
Paperback $16.99

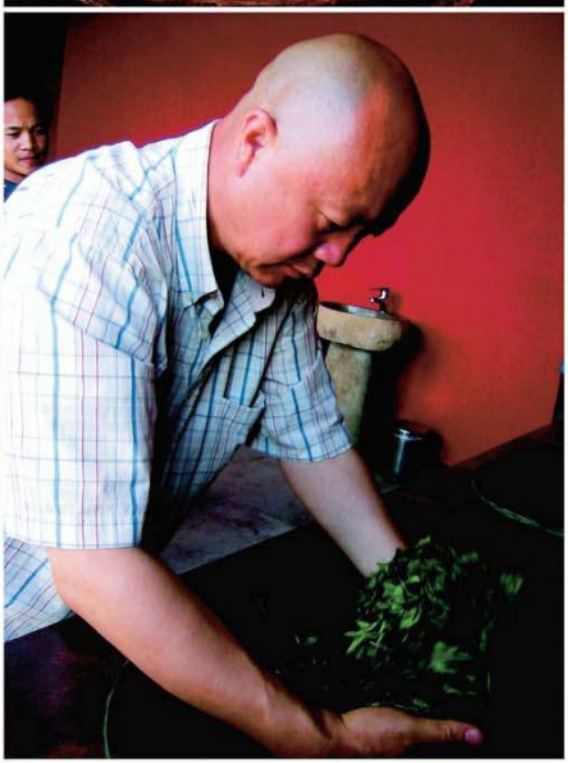


THIS POCKET GUIDE has rich detail on how to buy, brew, and enjoy the six classes of tea (green, yellow, white, oolong, black, and pu-erh) strictly from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. Questions regarding tea, tea steeping, and tea storage are answered with unparalleled passion for casual tea drinkers and connoisseurs alike. The Heisses tell their story of tea with each cup about the soil and air that nurtured it and the teamaking skills that transformed and shaped it. This book is not only a guide, but a great educational tool to learning about tea itself. Beautiful photographs and illustrations.

Available in APRIL 2010

The Teas of The Golden Bodhidharma

Story and photographs by
Jane Pettigrew



If you are lucky enough on your travels around the world of tea to discover puerh teas bearing the name 'Jin Damo'—in English 'Golden Bodhidharma'—never pass it by. Stop and try it and if no sample is available or offered, buy some with total confidence and enjoy its noble character at home. For no tea made by the Liu family ever disappoints. With their modest, simple, and utterly beautiful logo of Bodhidharma, seated on the ground and swathed in his red robe, the raw puerhs are available as compressed cakes of various sizes ranging from 100 grams to 500 grams and are sold in China, London, Yokohama, Kyoto, and Hong Kong. The name Jin Damo is only used for these high quality raw puerh cakes. The company also makes cooked puerhs, very small quantities of a black tea called Yunnan Red Cloud, and an exquisite white that has the wonderfully evocative name of Autumn Moon. All the teas are lovingly crafted by hand and dried in the sun on the workshop terrace at the family tea garden

Owned by Master Jia Xue Liu, his wife Dong Bi Lian, and daughter Didi, the company has its head office and shop in Kunming, Yunnan's capital city, and the tea is gathered from ancient trees in Xishuangbanna, the famous southern region of the province where the oldest tea trees in the world thrive in dense, humid forests close to the border with Burma and Laos. The family has been making teas since the days of Dong Bi Lian's grandfather who started his tea career in a puerh factory in Dali, in the northwestern part of Yunnan.

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The name Jin Damo provokes a smile each time one says it or sees the gentle, thoughtful Buddhist symbol on each carefully enclosed box or white porcelain tea bowl used at tea ceremonies presented by the company. The Liu family chose Jin Damo to capture in words the spiritual importance of tea and all its connections to Buddhism, while also symbolizing the complexities of the aging process of fine puerh teas. Bodhidharma, famous for having brought Zen Buddhism to China from India in the 5th century, taught that to reach a state of calm and 'oneness' with the wider universe, a long nine-year period of meditation, in the quest for enlightenment, was necessary—just as decades are required for newly-made, immature, raw, greenish puerh teas to mellow and mature until they offer complex layers of subtle flavors and aromas. The masculine Jin Damo also perfectly parallels the more feminine Tie Kuan Yin, synonymous with the finest Chinese and Taiwanese oolongs which offer a lighter, more floral character than the weightier puerhs. With the complexities of the Chinese language, the name also charmingly translates as 'now raining house' or 'new friends'—both interesting in the context of tea drinking and the occasions when tea plays such a valuable part in our lives.

At the garden in Xishuangbanna, the family's grove of old and revered tea trees stands within a fenced perimeter that protects it from the road and creates of it an almost enchanted, undiscovered, secret garden hidden from the view of everyday travelers. They cannot know the magic that turns fresh green shoots taken from trees that have grown here for the past 500 to 800 years and turns them into raw and cooked puerh teas that have a rich sweet aroma with hints of treacle, and a clean, layered and sophisticated, sometimes lightly smoky and earthy flavor. Master Liu himself oversees the light withering in the warm open air, the hot panning in large woks heated over wood fires, the gentle hand rolling on bamboo baskets to break the leaf cells, the days in the hot sun when the leaves gradually oxidize and dry, and the steaming that softens and dampens the finished *maocha* leaf before compressing it into perfectly round, neat discs the size of saucers, or elegant dessert plates.

Since puerh tea has only recently become available in the West, we are all still learning about its manufacture and character. There are basically two types of puerh. To make raw puerhs, the cakes of compressed maocha are stored for up to 50 years so that the rather green aroma and taste mature and become much mellower. Cooked puerh is made by adding water and enzymes to the maocha before compressing in order to achieve the same matured mellow character without having to wait for such a long time. Raw puerhs really need to age in carefully controlled conditions for a minimum of 10 years and the longer they are stored, the better they become. Cooked puerhs are ready after only a year or two and therefore cost much less. The Liu family make both raw and cooked puerhs to meet the demands of different markets. And to make good tea, the plants and trees that provide the leaf and buds must be nurtured and protected.

RIGHT: Didi next to the ancient tea trees in China's Xishuangbanna province.
LEFT: Breaking up steamed puerh cake before brewing tea.
OPPOSITE PAGE: Steaming a newly opened puerh cake.
OPPOSITE PAGE: Master Jia Xue Liu panning the withered tea leaves.

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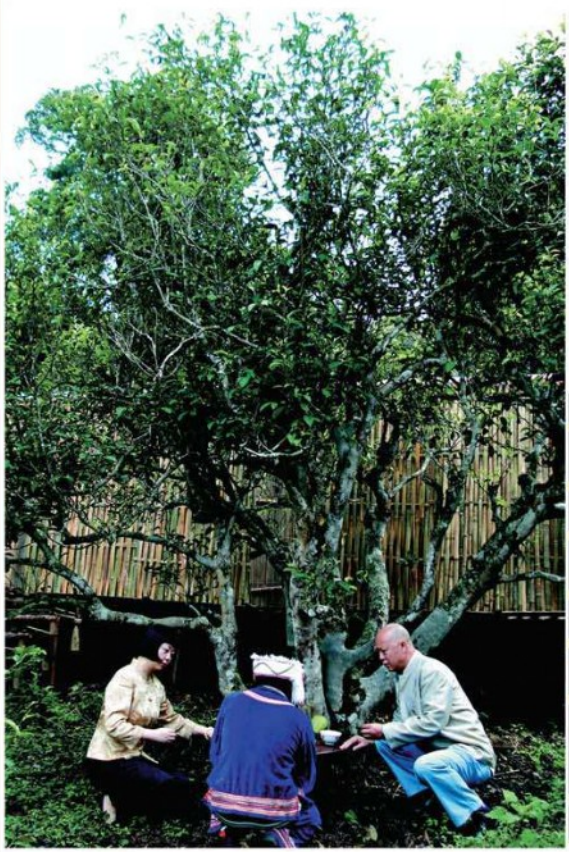
Everything that happens at the Liu tea garden is gracious, respectful, thoughtful, focused, and in harmony with nature.

Each time the family arrives from Kunming, or when visitors are welcomed, a blessing ceremony is performed, with incense, prayers and offerings of food, to honor the oldest tree. It sits, sturdy and secure with its five, intertwined, 800 year old trunks, silvery and knurled, its spreading branches vibrant with generously wide, bright green leaves and tightly furled buds. To ensure that the soil and roots of the precious trees are not disturbed, a pathway of upturned logs leads the way beneath the branches to different parts of the garden. In a lower corner where the ground slopes away to the forests beyond, a shady thatched tree house perches high among the branches of a tall camphor tree offering views out over the mountains of Burma, Laos, and in the distance, Vietnam.

Kunming, the family's home, is a busy town and an important centre for the tea trade. The extensive tea market covers the equivalent of an entire block and has two floors of shops where individual traders sit all day surrounded by their teas. Cardboard boxes and bamboo crates are filled with compressed puerh cakes of all shapes and sizes, loose green, black and puerh teas from the region, and colorful chests of dried hibiscus, chrysanthemums, rose petals, and lavender for herbal brews and flavored teas. But the Liu family does not trade here. Instead, a few streets away, they have an exclusive shop that is opened only by appointment for valued customers. Here, they can sit quietly with Master Liu, Dong Bi Lian, or Didi to taste the teas, discuss how the different puerhs are maturing and developing their smoother, mellower flavor as the years go by, decide what to buy and discuss terms before settling the deal. The shop is filled with treasures, given or collected over the years to create a very individual atmosphere of tea's heritage, not just from China but around the world. On one table sits a porcelain figure of Li Bai, famous Chinese poet, and on shelves around the room are porcelain figures, Yixing teapots, vases, European art nouveau figurines, pottery, guywans, kettles, and water jugs.

The family home is also the company's head office and showroom and as you arrive, it is immediately clear that every aspect of family and business life is a harmonious blend of Buddhist principles: a deep respect for people, a passion for tea, and an instinctive appreciation of beautiful objects. In the entrance lobby is a vase of fresh flowers or scattered flower petals, and incense burns discreetly, filling the air with gently exotic perfume. Each room is arranged to create an atmosphere of beauty and to display Jin Damo teas at their best so that customers and visitors can fully understand, taste, and appreciate them.



LEFT: The family honoring the 800 year old tea tree.
BELOW: Didi in the puerh showroom.

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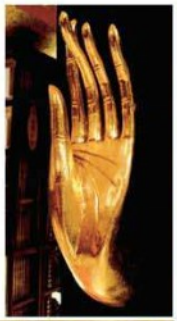

RIGHT: Buddah's golden hand.
FAR RIGHT: Dong Bi Lien serving tea.
BELOW: A sculpture of famous Chinese poet Li Bai.

And the family and their friends who work with them radiate kindness and gentle thoughtfulness so that in their presence, one feels a sense of peace and calm.

It is here too that the puerh cakes are stored in a special loft where the humidity and temperature are constantly monitored and controlled. In order to assess how the different teas are maturing, single cakes from different annual batches are removed from time to time and brewed for tasting. By tasting one cake, the family and their experienced customers can tell how much longer the puerh cakes from a particular year need to be stored before they reach their peak flavor. When tasting, Dong Bi Lian takes great care to prepare the chosen cake so that it gives of its best. Instead of simply unwrapping the cake and crumbling a small section of dry leaf into a pot (as most puerh drinkers would do), she wraps the entire cake in a soft cotton muslin cloth and places it in a special steamer. Once the tea has absorbed enough water vapor to allow it to be easily broken up, the cloth is removed and the entire cake is crumbled so that it looks like loose tea and a small quantity is then brewed for tasting. Older cakes tend not to need steaming in this way, as they are drier and more brittle and so break much more easily. But it is important to store the leaf in airtight tins so that it will keep well.

To bring out all the flavor, Dong Bi Lien always brews the teas in little Yixing pots. She gathers together little bowls, a water jug, a dish for the loose leaf, and the various wooden implements that she needs to scoop the leaf into the pot. Then she places the pot and drinking bowls onto a large wooden draining tray and washes them by pouring over plenty of hot water. In true gong-fu style, her movements are measured and elegantly choreographed as she slowly measures the leaf into the warm pot, pours in hot water to rinse the leaf, and almost immediately pours that first infusion into the bowls to warm them. But this first liquor is thrown away—it is only rinsing water used to wake up the leaves. Dong Bi Lian then adds more water and allows the leaf to steep for a brief 30 seconds or so before serving the clear amber liquor to her guests. She re-brews the leaves several times and each infusion offers different layers of aroma and flavor.

If your only experience of aged Chinese teas is of the cheaper, cooked puerhs that have a more intensely earthy flavor, fine raw puerhs like those made by the Liu family will change your expectations for ever. Just as our preference for fine wines develops with experience, so our palates recognize and appreciate the subtleties of quality teas made with such skill, care, and passion.

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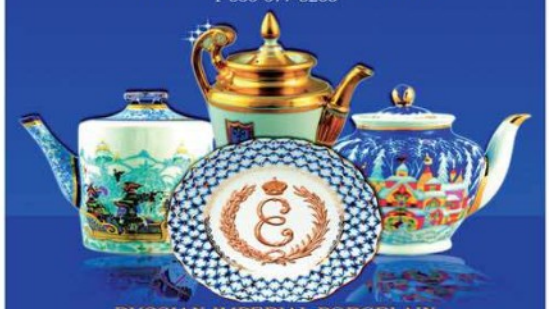

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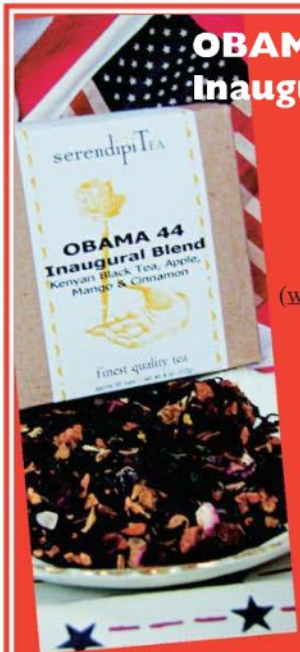

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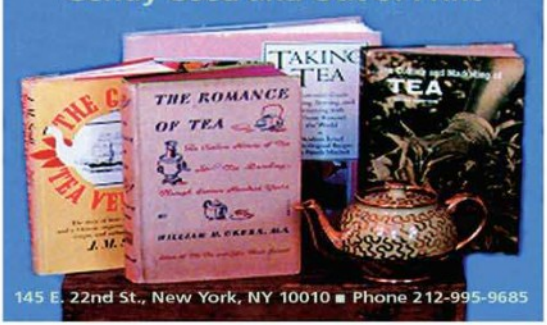

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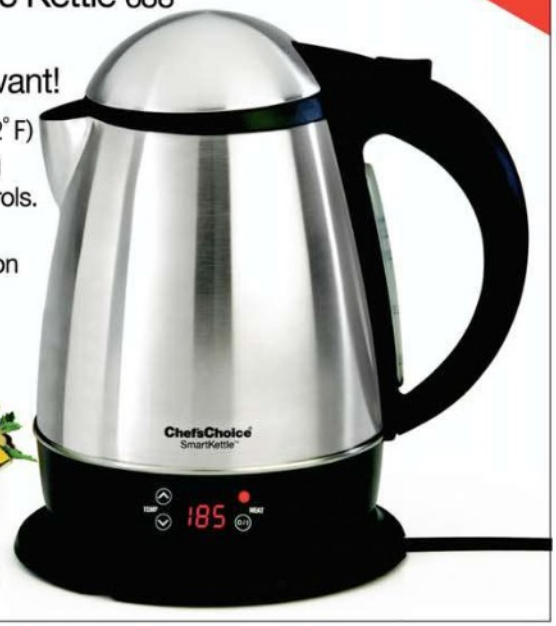

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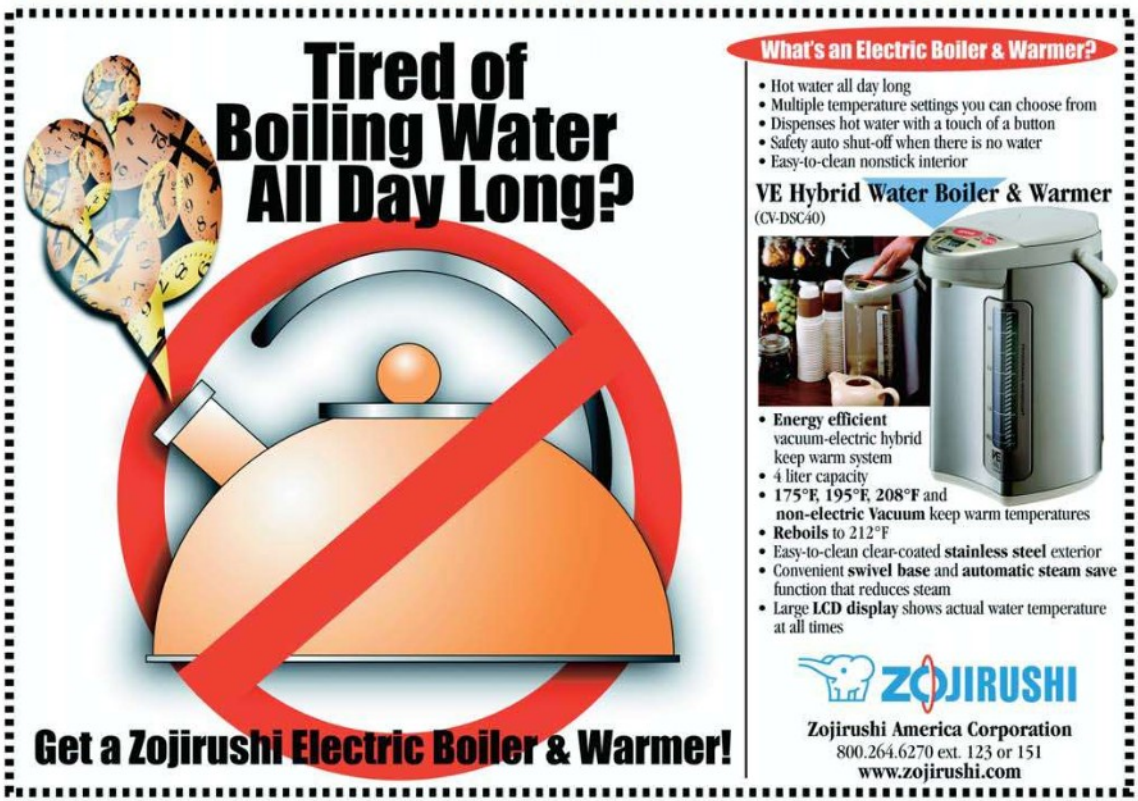
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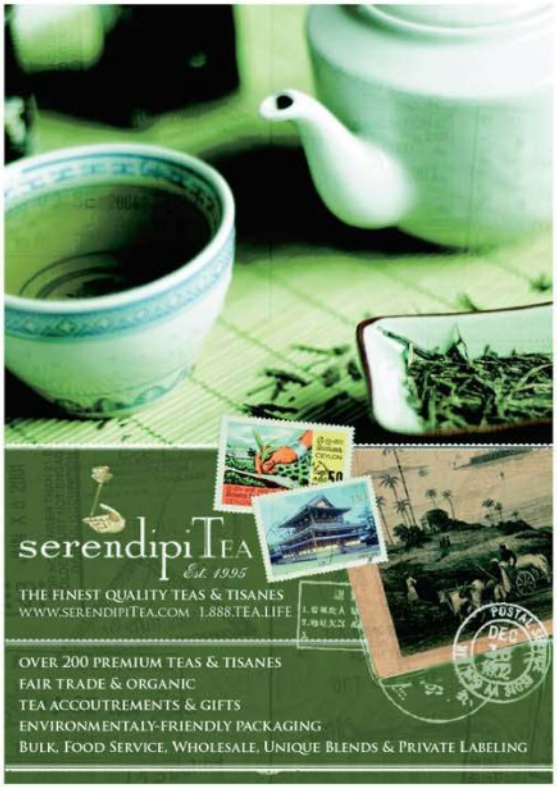

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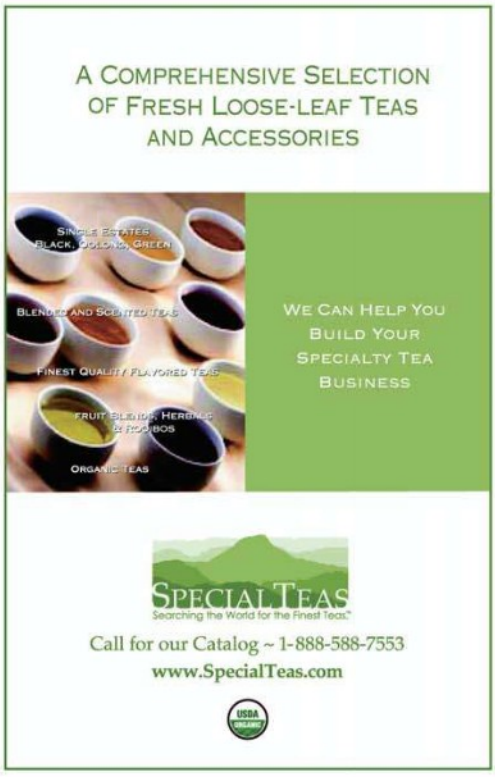
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CORRECTION: Caption on photograph in issue 59, page 7: Takahiro's great grandfather (right), his grandfather (middle), and a member of the company's staff (left).

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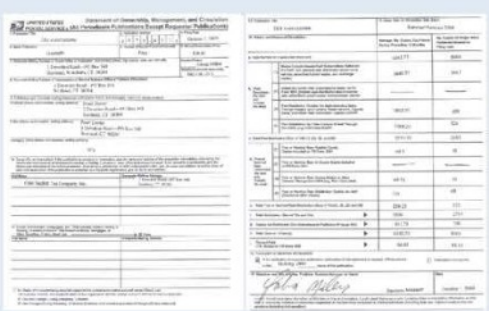

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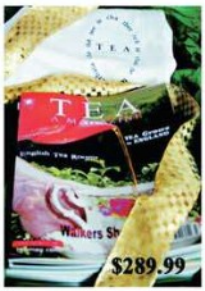

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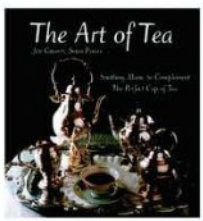

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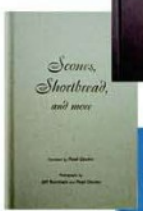

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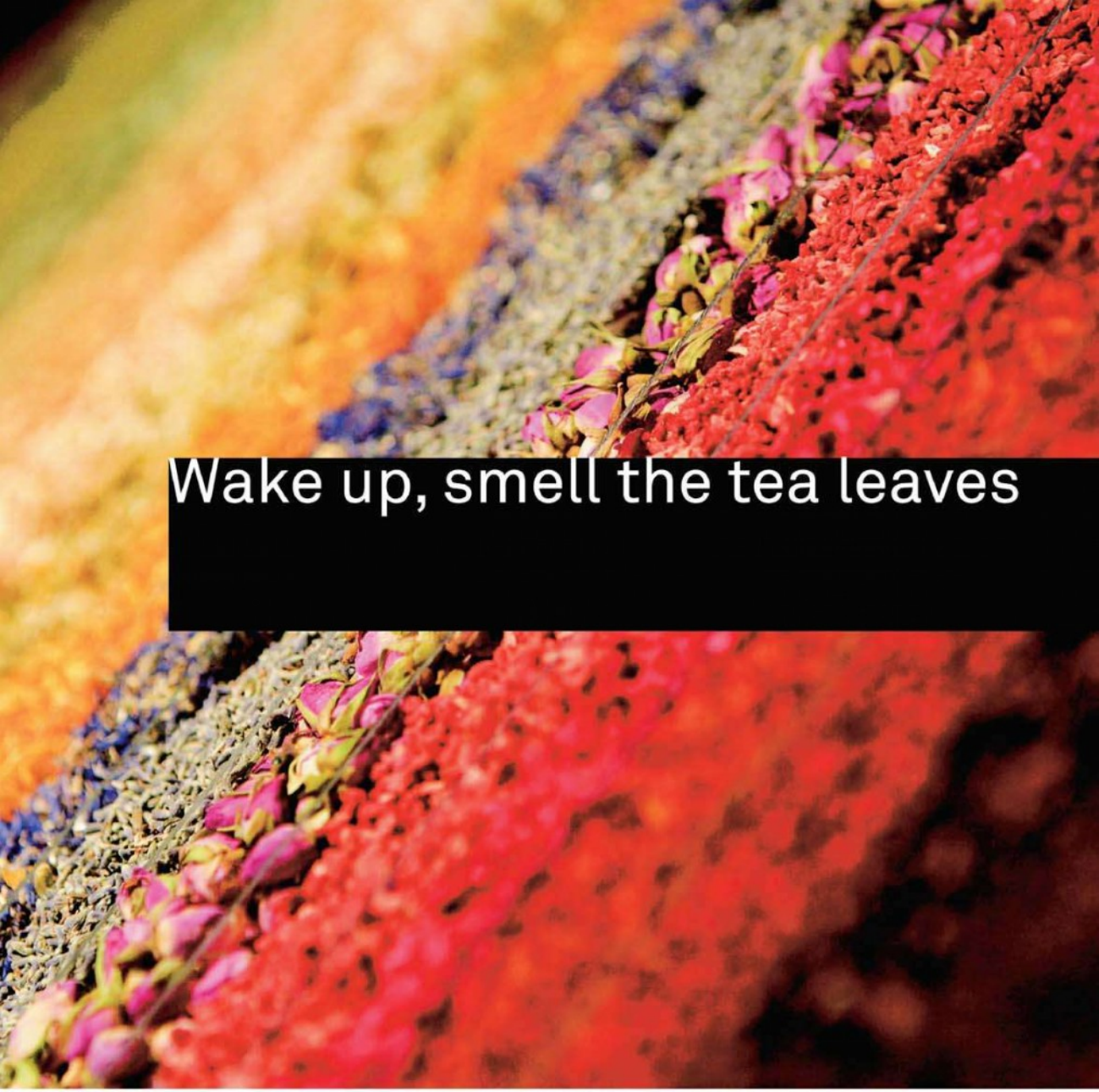

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